

It has often been noticed that the Sea-Dayaks have a far richer vocabulary of natural history names than have the Malays and that individual Dayaks have a more accurate knowledge of, and greater power of discrimination between, the different forms of animal and plant life with which they are indeed virtually brought up. In connection with this, it may be of interest to record that the Sea-Dayaks, besides using the general name of *klabembang* (*kabumbang*) for butterflies and moths, have the special name of *k'sulai* for the skipper butterflies (*Hesperidae*) and, by some Dayaks, for the swift-flying swallow tails (*Papilioninae*) as well. (The rich vocabulary of natural history names compared with that of more civilized neighbours has of course been noticed in many other primitive races besides the Dayaks, but illustrations of it are always of interest because the primitive daily merges into the next grade of the less primitive and so on along the dull marches of civilisation to the eventual complete extinction of all these little traces of *natural** man).

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Trengs.

The Trengs were once a large and powerful tribe, probably at one time spread over that portion of the interior of Borneo where the big rivers, Rejang, Baram, Limbang, Kayan and Koti rise. Their descendants in Sarawak relate to-day how the Trengs once lived in the head waters of the Limbang, Madihit, Tutau and Baram.

Carl Bock gives an account of some he met in Dutch Borneo, and among other things he notes that they are addicted to cannibalism.† Ling-Roth‡ barely mentions

* *Natural* in the highest and best sense of the word, i.e., man conversant with all the ways and beauties of Nature, through long and intimate association with Nature herself, *not* by means of a knowledge obtained through the devious paths of literature.

† *The Head-Hunters of Borneo*, by Carl Bock, 1882, pp. 131-136, 210, 214, 218, 221-222.

Mr. Bock's statement about cannibals is severely criticised by Messrs. Bampfylde and Brooke Low in the *Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo*, by H. Ling-Roth, 1896, Vol. II., pp. 222, 223. The only "proof" of cannibalism that I came across among the Tabuns, was the presence of a *human finger-nail* attached to some charms on the belt of a Tabun chief!—J. C. M.

‡ *Loc. cit.* and Vol. I., p. 37.

them. Spenser St. John* makes a few references to Tabuns (an offshoot of the Trengs) whom he met once or twice on the Limbang River, and that appears to be all that is recorded of them.† In Sarawak territory this once important tribe has been greatly reduced and is now in immediate danger of complete extinction. I make this my excuse for putting on record the following scanty notes, fully conscious of their meagreness but trusting that even this small amount will be considered better than nothing, since in a few decades, or years even, none will be obtainable.

Mr. R. S. Douglas, for the last 14 years Resident at Baram, has very kindly provided me with the main portion of these notes; to these I have added a few observations made by myself on two journeys up the Limbang River in 1910 and 1911.

The Trengs are closely allied to the Kalabits, with whom they probably shared the country mentioned above, until their Kenyah and Kayan enemies dispersed them. It was probably on this account that they became divided into three main tribes later on, known as the Long Patas, Pa Liits and Tabuns.

The Long Patas moved down the Pata River into the main Baram River and came in contact with the Kenyah Pohun of that river, whilst the Pa Liits lived in the Tutau River near Long Tepin and the Tabuns in the Malinau River. Here the latter two tribes were attacked by the Kayans from Baram and the Tabuns ran away to the Madalam River, a tributary of the Limbang. The Pa Liits under their chiefs, Tawi Layoh and Pong Saron, held out for a long time in a fortress they built at Long Maap, but were at last overcome by treachery. They were, however, saved from extinction by Orang Kaya Tumanggong, the Long Pata chief, who had now returned to the Tutau River, and they lived there for some time. Orang Kaya Tumanggong then moved over with all his people and the Pa Liits to the Limbang River, where he was shortly afterwards attacked by a Government force in 1895; the Pa Liits, however, under their chief Oyau Blawing, did not suffer, having already

* *Life in the Forests of the Far East*, by Sir Spenser St. John, 1863, 2nd Ed., Vol. II., pp. 26, 159.

† I have not been able to consult Dutch literature on the subject.

returned again to Baram just before. The Long Patas and Pa Liits now live in one village under Oyau Blawing in the Tutau River.

According to them, their two chiefs deities are *Baru*, god of the sky, and *Luma*, god of the earth. *Plaki*, the hawk, is their messenger and tells the people what to do. Their other omens are the same as those of the Kenyahs, i.e., *Isit* (?), *Telao* (Kijang), *Pladok* (Plandok), *Munin* (Munsang), etc.

After death their souls go to a country called Long Apek, a tributary of the Baram River near the mouth, probably the Lutong. This was found out by a man accidentally:—

“A sick man asked a friend of his to go out and get a monkey for him to eat, so the man went off with his blow-pipe. He soon came to a river which he did not recognise and heard voices as if there was a large number of people dwelling there. He entered the river and although he could hear voices all round him, he could see nothing.

“At last he managed to catch hold of one of these invisible beings, who spat in his eyes, whereupon the eyes of the man were opened and he saw a village and crowd of inhabitants. He also espied the sick man there, whom he had left behind. He asked him to come back with him but the other inhabitants refused to allow him to go, but the man threatened to amok if his friend were not allowed to return, so they agreed to send him back for a short time. When the man eventually returned home he found the sick man breathing his last. He called out the rest of the village at once and tried to find this strange country again, but he and his people searched in vain.”

Long Apek means “*tempat singgah*” that is “the calling place.” *Baru* rules over this country.

After a man (or woman) has died, his soul wanders about on the face of the earth, until his relations have gone through the ceremony of “*menulang*,” which consists of exhuming the corpse from a temporary grave, and the bones, having been cleaned, are put into a precious jar. After this process the soul floats down river until it reaches Long Apek. When they reach this spirit world they all have to work just as on earth,

specially the evildoers, who become Baru's slaves. They are always being trodden on; even when being put into their coffins their corpses swell and have to be stamped on by foot to get them in.

Men who are killed on the warpath, or women who die in childbirth, are exempt from this purifying process of "menulang," and their spirits float about in the air and live on the proceeds of the labour of the Long Apek people.

Palleh is their god of harvest, and he is represented by a constellation in the sky which represents a man striding over the Pleiades, with only one arm. Palleh lost this arm through an accidental cut from his mortal son-in-law Lurou, when clearing the jungle for farming.

They use the Pleiades and Orion constellations to find out the time for farming, which commences when the Pleiades are visible over the tree tops at early dawn. The Pleiades are called by them "Pun Bulo," i.e., the bamboo clump, and Orion is the "Pekassan," i.e., the pig trap.

As mentioned above, two divisions (the Long Patas and Pa Liits) of this once powerful race are now reduced to living in one house containing some 40 families. This is on the Tutau River, a bare two days' journey above the Government station at Claudetown. The remaining division, the Tabuns, are confined to some three small houses near the mouth of the Madalam River which flows into the Limbang about 60 miles from the coast. The chief of them is Tama Belulok, who lives in a small house at Kuala Damit. According to him the Trengs were a powerful race at one time inhabiting the country between the head-waters of the Limbang, Madihit and Baram. Through a continuous series of reverses, raids by their enemies and ravages of disease they are now reduced to a vanishing point. In fact the younger generation in Tama Belulok's house no longer talk Tabun, but have adopted the speech of their immediate neighbours the Adang Muruts, with whom they are inter-marrying. In the house of Tama Seluling, another Tabun at Kuala Madalam, it is the same. In the matter of language the following notes may be of interest. First of all Murut, Kalabit and Tabun (Treng) seem very much alike and have a certain number of words in common. Limbang Tabuns can nearly all understand

and speak Kalabit and Murut; the rising generation of Tabuns know very little Tabun; a Trusan Murut could follow a Kalabit's conversation but could only reply in Murut which was barely intelligible to the Kalabit. A Dayak who had married a Murut, and lived with Muruts for several years was perfectly at home in the Adang-Murut language but was useless at Kalabit, and could hardly understand or make himself understood by Kalabits. One or two Tabuns knew Penan and could understand it. Oya Blawing the Long Pata (Treng) Chief is the Government Agent for all the Penans of the Baram district, and Tama Belulok, the Tabun chief, acts in a similar capacity in the Limbang district. Muruts and Kalabits, whom I met, could not understand or be understood by Penans. Many Adang Muruts knew Dayak fairly well, but seldom any Malay. Kalabits knew neither. Tabuns knew both.

According to Tabuns themselves they differ from Adang Muruts in that the latter eat five times a day to the Tabuns' three; the Adangs plant paddy every three months, the Tabuns every six. There is a medicine-man or manang in Tama Seluling's house (Tabun), and when the inmates are ill, fowls or eggs are put outside at his advice for the propitiation of the antu (spirits). Rice and other food is not used for this purpose. They firmly believe in bird omens but do not take much account of dreams like the Sea-Dayaks. Up the Limbang River a little way inland near the Kuala Salindong, there is a small deserted cave in which remains of some 40 burial jars were found. These were supposed to have been used by a long since forgotten tribe of Trengs, who, like Muruts and Kalabits of to-day, buried their dead in these big jars for a short period, afterwards depositing the remaining bones in small jars for permanent burial in some other place.

Tabun men pull out the hair from the upper lip with depilatory forceps and many pull out the eye-brows. On the fore part of the head, the hair is cut short, also above the ears and round the back leaving a long stream of hair from the crown, which in several of the Limbang Tabuns reaches below the waist. Tabuns only black the upper row of teeth; Muruts black both.

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